



# BATTLE OF AVERASBORO



## Union Route to Bentonville



### CAROLINAS CAMPAIGN

The Carolinas Campaign began on February 1, 1865, when Union Gen. William T. Sherman led his army north from Savannah, Georgia, after the "March to the Sea." Sherman's objective was to join Gen. Ulysses S. Grant in Virginia to crush Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Scattered Confederate forces consolidated in North Carolina, the Confederacy's logistical lifeline, where Sherman defeated Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's last-ditch attack at Bentonville. After Sherman was reinforced at Goldsboro late in March, Johnston saw the futility of further resistance and surrendered on April 26, essentially ending the Civil War.



As Gen. William T. Sherman marched north from Fayetteville, Gen. Joseph E. Johnston positioned his army near Smithfield, uncertain whether Sherman's destination was Raleigh or Goldsboro. On March 15, 1865, the head of Sherman's Left Wing struck Confederate Gen. William J. Hardee's skirmishers guarding the road just south of Averagesboro. Hardee struck back, and the fight began. After several bloody attacks and counterattacks, Hardee withdrew during the night of March 16, and Sherman turned toward Goldsboro.

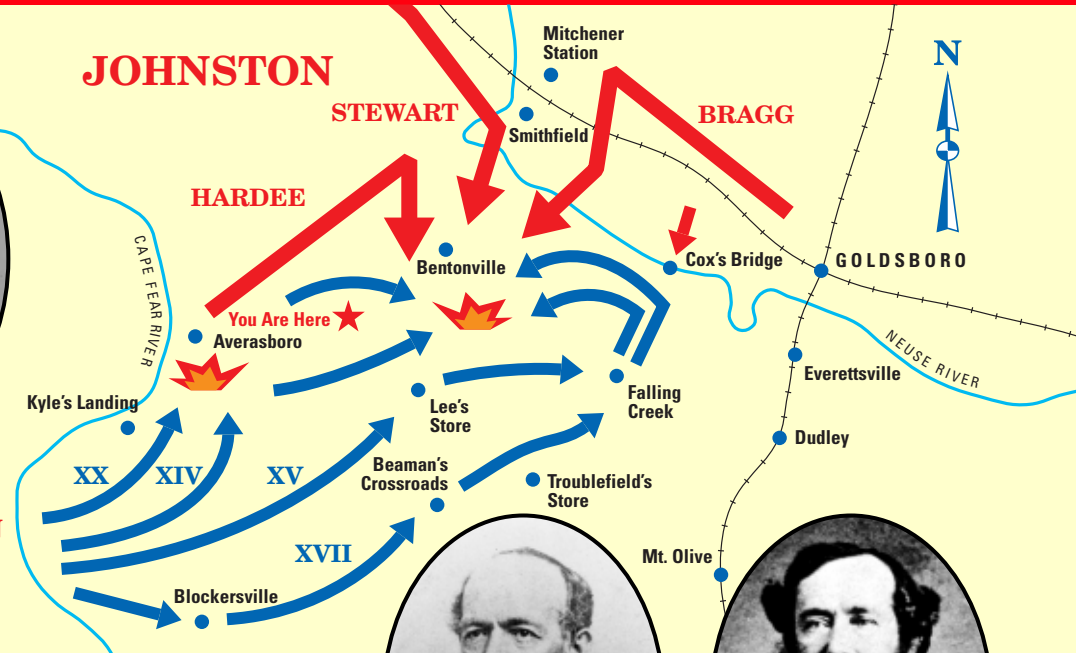
Gen. William T. Sherman's Left Wing, the U.S. Army's XIV and XX Corps, marched past this point on March 17, 1865. The determined Confederate resistance at the Battle of Averagesboro on March 15-16 had delayed the Union march to Goldsboro, increasing the distance between the Left Wing here and the Right Wing several miles to the east and south. Confederate cavalry harassed the Federals as they marched down this road. At Smithfield, Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston studied area maps and concluded that Sherman's two wings were far enough apart that if one was attacked it might be defeated before



Gen. William T. Sherman  
Courtesy of Library of Congress

HAMPTON  
FAYETTEVILLE  
SHERMAN

the other could come to its aid. The next day, March 18, Gen. Wade Hampton notified Johnston that the Left Wing was approaching Bentonville, where the Confederate cavalry had taken up positions. That night, Johnston marched most of his army to Hampton's side and by the next morning was ready to spring the trap.



Gen. Joseph E. Johnston  
Courtesy of Library of Congress



Gen. Wade Hampton  
Courtesy of Library of Congress